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earlier. If this should prove to be the case, the reader may well be content with the slowness of the publication.

CHARLES M. ANDREWS.

*Report of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association, 1896.* [Ext. from the Report of the American Historical Association for 1896.] (Washington: Government Printing Office. 1897 [1898]. Pp. 463-1107.)

IN 1895 the Executive Council of the American Historical Association appointed an Historical Manuscripts Commission to edit, index, or collect information in regard to unprinted documents relating to American history. Professor Jameson, who had for several years advocated and worked for the establishment of such a body, was fitly made chairman. The other members of the Commission as originally appointed were Mr. Douglas Brymner, Mr. Talcott Williams, and Professors Trent and Turner. The first Report of the Commission is now before the public. The main part of this report consists of six parcels of hitherto unpublished material, five of which vividly illustrate the political feeling and methods, the economic wants and interests of the principal divisions of the country in the formative period of our nation-life, 1783-1800. The remaining parcel contains some intercepted letters purporting to be written by an officer in the English army in 1756 to the Duke de Mirepoix proposing to betray the English interests in the West to the French if the necessary money is provided. These documents seem to me the least valuable in the Report. Mr. Brymner in his introduction is very non-committal on the question of their authenticity. "These and other facts," he says, "give a greater color of probability to the authenticity" of these letters. Although I have not studied them closely enough to venture a very positive opinion, I am inclined to think they are merely, in the words of Halifax, "an artifice to draw a little money from France." The bragging tone and the inconsistencies in the narrative arouse one's suspicions. The complete uncertainty of any fact alleged in these letters that is not elsewhere confirmed makes their value slight at best. Halifax conjectured that the writer was an Irishman because the spelling seems to indicate an Irish pronunciation. Professor Jameson has arrived at the same conclusion. It seems to me, however, that the French idioms in the writer's English indicate that he was a Frenchman who had acquired a good command of colloquial English, but who was not secure from an occasional lapse to native forms of expression. If he learned his English from Irishmen the peculiarities of his spelling are accounted for. On the other hand, the French idioms are of a kind that no foreigner would acquire. For example, p. 664, "I've some time ago, been very ill used by the English Governours here have within these 15 days, been solicited to be at the head of a considerable army," etc. The use of "15 days" instead of "fortnight" seems to me an almost convincing indication that the writer was thinking partly in French or else that the

present text is a translation of a French original. Cf. this phrase on p. 671, "a few days ago, there has been at New York a Congress."

The contrast between the baffling vagueness of these letters and the throbbing life of those relating to the plan of the French Republic in 1792-3 to recover Louisiana and to revolutionize the Spanish colonies is striking. In these documents, partly derived from the Draper collection in the possession of the Wisconsin Historical Society and partly copied for the Commission from the originals in the French Archives we see well-known historical characters working at a train of events of enormous possible consequence, too vast, in fact, for the means at the disposal of the conspirators. On one side it is the prelude to Napoleon's recovery of Louisiana and the cession of it to the United States, and, in another aspect, the prelude to Burr's conspiracy. As the Revolutionary committee on legislation laid the solid foundations of the Code Napoleon, so the origin of Napoleon's Louisiana policy is traced back beyond Talleyrand to the earlier days of the Revolution, to Brissot and the unknown author of the "*Plan proposé pour faire une révolution dans la Louisiane*" who tells us that he had tried in 1787 to interest the old government in the project.

Professor Turner's able study of the origin and development of this great design in the July number of the REVIEW precludes any extended comment on the new facts disclosed by these documents, but one or two remarks may be ventured. In regard to Genet's mission, it is not too much to say, that the accounts of it in our histories and lectures must be entirely reconstructed. Hitherto we have missed the essential and momentous elements, and made merry or become sarcastic over the indiscretions and impertinences of the youthful French minister. Again in these letters the old truth that only steam transportation has made a permanent union of the states possible receives new and vivid illustration. With both Frenchmen and Westerners it seems an accepted fact that nature designed the Mississippi valley for a political unit; that its interests were too diverse and that it was too remote from the coast states to find in union with them the fulfillment of its destiny; and that the working of those same forces which two generations later made inevitable the failure of the South to divide this unit and to establish a new power in control of the lower waters of the Mississippi, was destined to wreck the Spanish power on the Gulf. So both Frenchmen and Westerners vie with each other in urging on the crisis and in preparing to seize the fragments. The plot unfolds itself with dramatic intensity, and one cannot help a twinge of disappointment at its collapse. The story, too, is not without its humor, as may be seen from the delicious Wellerism of old De Pauw in his account of the untimely end of La Chaise, one of the conspirators. "But he has meet with the unhappy corcimstance of Lassing his existence, by the parting of his head from his body, by the gal-loutinne under the name of gonbo Lachase which name he bor in franch before by coming from the mississippi, which is the name of a dich made in that country (Our)inds all lachase Exploys." When I add that

this worthy's French was hardly more literate than his English, the reader will second the suggestion that the editor might now and then have permitted himself to provide a gloss to smooth or hasten our progress. Take for example this sentence, p. 980. "ses habitans sont en general bons soldats et j'atesté quil mobien de fois communiquer qui ferons tout leur possible de bouleverser le gouvernement espagnole."

The selections from the communications which Phineas Bond, the British consul to the Middle States, sent to his home authorities, give us a valuable picture of our critical period. Bond, formerly a Loyalist of the higher type, now doubly devoted to the mother country through persecution, reveals the breaches that natural commercial interests were making in the old colonial system. He records with no little apprehension the migration of British artisans, the surreptitious importation of machinery, and the beginnings of that China trade which brought so much wealth to Massachusetts, and which was for a time almost the only resource of her merchants after independence had shut us out from the British system. The demoralizing effects of the revolutionary war, the profound commercial depression which followed, and the alarm as to the future in the minds of all thoughtful citizens are vividly depicted by this not unfriendly observer.

That the formation and adoption of the Constitution is to be viewed as a conservative reaction from the Revolution is enforced as clearly in the letters of the Boston merchant Stephen Higginson as it is in those of the British consul. In both, also, the economic historian will find useful material and effective illustrations. For the student of politics these Higginson letters deserve a place beside the Wolcott correspondence as a mirror of New England Federalism.

A companion picture of South Carolina politics early in this century is presented in the selections from the diaries of Edward Hooker, who, after his graduation from Yale, spent several years in the South as teacher. Among the interesting features of this diary are the reports of the discussions in the legislature on the suppression of the slave trade, the accounts of the prevalent venality of offices, of electioneering, of the duplicate voting in different counties by the large landholders, and the observations on the population. We think of South Carolina as having a fairly homogeneous white population, but to this Connecticut youth in 1805 the people of the state seemed as heterogeneous a mixture of foreigners as is now to be found in one of our western farming states.

Too high praise cannot be given for the thorough and scholarly manner in which these documents have been prepared for publication by the editors, Professor Jameson and, for the Genet-Clark papers, Professor Turner. The introductions are models of their kind, conveying in concise form the essential information for an adequate appreciation of each document. The editors' notes are equally painstaking and excellent. Other valuable features of the *Report* are the index of documents relating to the Genet-Clark expedition, the calendar of Stephen Higginson's correspondence so far as published in the *Report* or elsewhere, and the ex-

tremely useful "List of Printed Guides to and Descriptions of Archives in the United States and Canada" which was prepared under the editor's suggestion by Dr. E. C. Burnett of Brown University. Altogether this first report is one in which the Commission may justly take pride, and for which historical students will be warmly grateful. The Commission has proved its usefulness in the most convincing manner, and its future publications will be awaited with lively interest.

In closing, I should like to urge the publication of future reports in separate volumes. This entire report, comprising nearly 650 pages, is crowded into Vol. I. of the current *Report of the Historical Association* as Art. XXI. That tome is thereby swollen to the dimensions of a dictionary. If the Report of the Manuscripts Commission had been printed in a volume by itself, like Professor Ames's prize essay, it would have presented a better appearance and have been more convenient to use.

EDWARD GAYLORD BOURNE.

*The Voyages of the Cabots; Latest Phases of the Controversy.* By SAMUEL EDWARD DAWSON, Litt.D. (Laval). [From the Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada for 1897.] (Ottawa: James Hope and Co. 1897. Pp. 130, 3 maps.)

*John and Sebastian Cabot; The Discovery of North America.* By C. RAYMOND BEAZLEY, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford. (New York: Longmans, Green and Co. 1898. Pp. xx, 311.)

*Cabot's Discovery of North America.* By G. E. WEARE. (London: Macqueen. 1897. Pp. xi, 343, 12 maps and plates.)

It is not easy for one living far from the fields of strife to appreciate the passionate bitterness of disagreement, which has characterized much of the recent discussion of the historical problems associated with the careers of John and Sebastian Cabot. At Oxford, apparently, according to a communication in the *English Historical Review* for January last, Mr. E. J. Payne has been subjected to "odium and some coarse personal vituperation" for holding certain curious notions which continue to be contrary to the received opinion. In Newfoundland and Eastern Canada, the Cabot landfall controversy has raged with terrible earnestness, of which a faint after-glow is discernible on the pages of Dr. Dawson's review of the latest phases of the discussion.

In 1894, Dr. S. E. Dawson of Ottawa prepared for the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of Canada an elaborate treatise, in which he undertook to establish the location of the spot whereon English feet first trod the soil of North America. Mr. Harris of Paris had previously shown, with great learning, that every sixteenth-century map which offers any information upon this subject, with a single exception, describes Labrador as the country discovered by Englishmen from Bristol. This discovery was made by Cabot in 1497, and there are three or four documents dated in that year, which contain everything which is now known with